Food Studies Newsletter September 2022

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Welcome!

Welcome to fall 2022 and our first Food Studies newsletter of the academic year! Celia Hoffman (choffman@middlebury.edu) is our newsletter editor again and would welcome ideas of things you'd like to see here.

The numbers of Food Study Minors and Independent Food Studies Scholars continue to grow. Four Independent Scholars have graduated, 3 are in the works, and 2 additional students have told me that they want to put forward proposals. Seven Minors have graduated since fall of 2020, 13 more have declared the Minor but not graduated, 8 more have told me they definitely plan to declare, and about 6 additional students have expressed interest in the Minor. Independent Scholars must submit their proposals during their sophomore year (with the fall deadline right around the corner) and Minors must be declared at least one week before the end of the add period of your seventh semester. If you are considering either option, check the Student Handbook for guidance and talk with me.

Note that our Food Studies website has been restructured and (hopefully) improved – it should be much easier now to tell when certain classes are being offered. Two Food Studies classes are scheduled for the Winter Term: Vermont's Food, Farms & Future (taught by Jeannie Bartlett) and Garden as Metaphor and Sustenance: Memory and Broadcasting the Future (taught by Megan Brakeley). Grab a spot in one of them as soon as registration opens up!

Updates on the Knoll

The Knoll is a three-acre site that provides students with hands-on, practical education in organic agriculture and a place to pursue positive environmental, economic, and social change. The Knoll grows over 150 varieties of annual and perennial crops that are harvested for Midd Dining and Retail Operations, HOPE (Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects), and Nulhegan Food Security Project.

It's so exciting to see so many people visiting the Knoll this year! This fall, the Knoll hosted orientation activities for a variety of student groups, made dinner for the Clifford Symposium on Conflict Transformation, made flower arrangements with student groups, and welcomes weekly volunteers to work in the garden. Looking ahead, the Knoll is hosting a Fall Family Weekend Open House on Friday, October 7, and a final Thank You Pizza for garden volunteers on Friday, October 28.

We are gearing up for the 20th anniversary season and putting together a compilation of art, writings, and musings as a Knoll Retrospective book publication next year. We're accepting submissions until October 10 – check it out at go/knollbookpoll All are welcome to get involved at the Knoll! You can learn the latest at go/knollhours, and follow us at @middknoll and on Instagram. Also, Knoll Friends is an emerging student collective and companion organization to the Knoll. Follow @knollfriends on Instagram to stay updated!

Come volunteer at the Knoll during weekly volunteer hours!

September 12 - October 28, 2022

- Mondays 10:15am - 12:15pm (meet at FECH office 109)
- Wednesdays 10am - 12:15pm
- Thursdays 2pm - 4pm **
- Fridays 10:15am - 12:15pm and 1pm - 3pm

** Thursdays are held as a BIPOC affinity space, facilitated by BIPOC student interns and staff

Student Feature: Viv Merrill ‘23

Viv, an Independent Scholar at Middlebury focusing on sustainable agriculture and food policy, spent the summer learning about fiber arts in Vermont. Funded by a grant from the Innovation Hub, Viv met with local farmers, gathered and spun wool, and ultimately made a sweater to engage in a hands-on way with the topic. While she experienced each step in the fiber system, Viv also learned about the deeply intertwined history of settlers in the state of Vermont and sheep farming which has shaped landscapes and communities in the state. Inspired to learn more, Viv expanded her summer research into her senior project where she interviews farmers and artists in Vermont today.

Viv has always been interested in the environment and learned at a young age how the food we eat affects the world around us. She sees agriculture as our fundamental means of connecting to the land and thus has pursued an Independent Scholar track in conjunction with the Food Studies department. For her senior project, Viv interviews farmers and artists in Vermont today to better understand how the history of sheep in the area shapes the state. Her summer research provided her with many connections with farmers and artists to create an oral history archive, something that will paint a picture of the fiber arts community in Vermont while preserving the stories of farmers and artists.

Alum Feature: Will Drucker ‘08.5

https://www.splitspirits.com/pages/home.

Will has always been passionate about sustainability. After graduating Middlebury in 2008, he became interested in whiskey production and visited independent distilleries around New York. Will quickly learned traditional whiskey production requires the beverage to ferment in a white oak barrel, which gives the beverage its flavor and color. However, he also learned that the barrels themselves have a significant environmental impact. White oak barrels require harvesting large quantities of fully grown trees and transporting them from Missouri, where the majority of large white oak trees grow. Will remarked, “all the whiskey I had tasted were from one species from one part of the world”, and began to search for a local, more sustainable approach to whiskey production. Will searched for an alternative production method, and developed a method of infusing bottles of whiskey with a sliver of wood, instead of fermenting the whiskey in a barrel. In the fall of 2019, Will had his first line of spirits, “Split Spirits”, made in collaboration with Appalachian Gap Distillery.

Will uses a “terroir” approach to whiskey, embracing place-based flavor profiles and emphasizing location as part of production. He uses wood discarded by builders for structural purposes and uses local trees from the area to decrease the environmental impact of production. Additionally, Will sources the grain for his spirits from farmers practicing regenerative agriculture to minimize the negative impacts of grain production. In 2020, Appalachian Gap Distillery started the process to become carbon neutral certified, and became the first carbon neutral distillery, a certification that encompasses all upstream and downstream impacts.

Job Opportunities

Plant Futures Initiative - Founding a Middlebury Chapter
Green Mountain Farm-to-School - Development Manager
Center for an Agricultural Economy - Farm Connex Food Hub Delivery Driver
Vermont Foodbank - Warehouse Supervisor
Intervale Center - Seed Collector
Vermont Foodbank - Network Relations Manager
Vermont Foodbank - Warehouse Selector
Chittenden Solid Waste District - Community Outreach Coordinator
Rural Vermont - Operations Director
Vermont Foodbank - Equity People and Culture Coordinator
Black Dirt Farm - Route Operator
Black Dirt Farm - Chicken Tender
Small Planet Institute - Democracy Intern
Also see VT Farm to Plate - Job Listings

Upcoming Events

Five-Star Farmstays Course - October 10
Finding Your Future in Food Systems - October 19, and November 8
12th Annual Farm to Plate Network Gathering - November 10, 2022
NOFA-VT Winter Gathering - February 18-19, 2023
Northeast Farm to Institution Summit 2023 - April 18 & 19, 2023